

February 1534. He had two hundred men and sixty-two horses. Not long after, Almagro, informed of Alvarado's advance by Rojas, set off for the coast, where he learned in early April of Benalcazar's unauthorized departure from San Miguel. This news was in turn reported back to Pizarro. By late May 1534, Pizarro himself was laying plans to take the Spaniards not needed at Cuzco, Jauja, and San Miguel and march to Quito.<sup>80</sup> He soon abandoned these plans, preferring to let Almagro follow Benalcazar while he went to the coast to select a site for the "city of kings," which became Lima.

Alvarado's invasion of Ecuador went badly and was conducted with tactics learned in Central America, including the use of neck chains to keep Indian porters from running away. By the time he reached the highlands, Benalcazar had occupied Quito (June 22) and Almagro had joined him (July?). After a tense confrontation that almost produced a war, the rival camps agreed that Almagro, acting on behalf of the Pizarro-Almagro-Luque partnership, would buy out Alvarado's investment in ships and equipment for one hundred thousand pesos in gold. Alvarado's men, most of whom had probably paid their own ways, as was the custom then, were allowed to stay and join Pizarro's forces, but Alvarado had to return to Guatemala. Not long after signing this agreement on August 26, 1534, Almagro and Alvarado set out for Jauja to collect the money. Benalcazar, still loyal to Pizarro, was left to govern Quito.<sup>81</sup>

Almagro's bargain with Alvarado affected De Soto's rule at Cuzco in two ways. First, in following Pizarro's instructions, he had persuaded the residents to surrender enough gold and silver to make up the gift to Charles V that the cabildo had agreed to on August 4, 1534 (at Pizarro's request). Apparently the bargain he struck with the Spanish residents, at a meeting held in their church, was that he would not enforce Pizarro's orders against trade with and extortion from the various Indian groups if they would pay their shares. Once paid up, the thirty-four thousand marks of silver and twenty-six to twenty-seven thousand pesos de oro of the gift were sent to Jauja. But this fortune was diverted to buy out Alvarado.<sup>82</sup> De Soto's prestige among the Spaniards at Cuzco probably did not suffer for all of this because he was

<sup>80</sup>Hemming, *Conquest of the Incas*, 153; Pizarro and royal officials to cabildo of Panama, Jauja, 25 May 1534, in Raúl Porrás Barrenechea, ed., *Cartas del Perú (1524-1543)* (Lima: Sociedad de Bibliófilos, 1959), 114; this document is also found in *DII*, 10:134-43.

<sup>81</sup>Hemming, *Conquest of the Incas*, 159-64.

<sup>82</sup>*Pesquisa*, by Bishop Verlanga, Lima, 20 August 1535, *DII*, 10:246-72, especially 247-49, 256-57, 264, 272.

with them in continuing to loot, extort, and otherwise get all the gold and silver he could from the local population.<sup>83</sup>

The second effect of the Almagro-Alvarado bargain was Pizarro's decision of late 1534 to reward Almagro with the lieutenancy of Cuzco. De Soto had shown himself disobedient and had not taken kindly to the arrival of Juan and Gonzalo Pizarro, sent to maintain the Pizarro interest in Cuzco.

Almagro was on his way to Cuzco when word was received in early 1535 that his petition for a section of South America south of Pizarro's 270 leagues had been approved.<sup>84</sup> Almagro immediately concluded that Cuzco fell within his area and moved to occupy it (March 1535). De Soto's initial position was to resist this claim, but he apparently was persuaded of its justice (or at least his interest in supporting Almagro) and came to be viewed by Juan Pizarro as pro-Almagro.<sup>85</sup> Francisco Pizarro, who believed that Cuzco was in his grant, sent Melchor Verdugo to Cuzco with a formal revocation of his company agreement with Almagro and a new appointment of De Soto as his lieutenant, with Juan Pizarro as captain of the Spanish militia. Almagro ignored this, forcing Francisco Pizarro to go to Cuzco himself. Throughout these events, De Soto seems to have done nothing to cause the Almagro and Pizarro factions to disarm themselves. Civil strife was averted, but probably not because he exercised the authority of his office to try to prevent it. Rather, what little evidence there is suggests that De Soto was deeply involved in the partisanship of the time, doing nothing to cool passions.

Once in Cuzco in late May, Pizarro got Almagro to agree to occupy Chile under terms of an agreement they signed on June 12. Pizarro pledged to put up one hundred thousand pesos for the venture.<sup>86</sup> Chile was clearly outside of the limits of Pizarro's grant, whose exact boundary was to be determined by the bishop of Panama, Tomás de Verlana, as the actual royal orders made clear when they arrived.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Swanton, *Final Report*, 73, notes that De Soto presided at the meeting of the Cuzco cabildo on 25 October 1534, during which the allotment of town lots was begun.

<sup>84</sup>Text, dated 21 May 1534 (*sic*), is in *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Chile*, 4:224-39.

<sup>85</sup>Hemming, *Conquest of the Incas*, 174-76; queen to Francisco Pizarro, Madrid, 17 December 1535, in *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Chile desde el viaje de Magallanes hasta la batalla del Maipo, 1518-1818*, 30 vols. (Santiago: Imprenta Ercilla, 1888-1902), 4:328.

<sup>86</sup>Text in *ibid.*, 4:319-22.

<sup>87</sup>For some of the documents in this ongoing dispute, see *ibid.*, 4:224-39, 318-19, 385-98, 407-18, and 5:279-80.

Pizarro also ordered the smelting of all precious metals, so that the royal fifth could be deducted. Hernán Ponce, now at Cuzco and acting for De Soto, presented some 18,500 pesos of gold of various finenesses on May 20. When smelted, they yielded gold worth 5,456,800 *maravedis*, from which the king got 1,080,448.<sup>88</sup> The Pizarros presented even larger amounts for smelting and taxation.

With Almagro agreed to go to Chile,<sup>89</sup> a move also supported by Manco Inca for his own reasons, the question arose as to whether Almagro would appoint an agent to conquer the coast from the Straits of Magellan northward. De Soto volunteered himself and two hundred thousand ducats. He and Ponce had just renewed their partnership (June 27).<sup>90</sup> Almagro got Rodrigo Orgoñez, by now a faithful follower, to propose to undertake this task, with one hundred thousand pesos de oro supplied by Almagro.

De Soto's motivation is not hard to discover. He was clearly out of the picture so far as a continued role at Cuzco. Moreover, the lack of Indian fighting since July 1534 had probably caused him to become restless. His ambition did the rest. Orgoñez wrote to a cousin that he and De Soto nearly came to blows, so intense were their desires to have a leading role in the new conquest. De Soto claimed Almagro had made certain, undisclosed promises to him, which he demanded be honored. But Almagro, probably with some pressure from Pizarro, refused. Instead, he openly preferred Orgoñez.<sup>91</sup> Orgoñez immediately wrote to his relatives in Spain to get them to press for a grant of five hundred leagues of coast, various offices for himself (patterned on Pizarro's grant), a habit of the Order of Santiago, confirmation of his encomienda at Pachacama, and the legitimization of his birth, to note but the more important items.<sup>92</sup>

Almagro's support of Orgoñez over De Soto was probably the bitterest humiliation De Soto had had to suffer. Although not all of the details may have been known, the fact of Orgoñez's illegitimacy and his shady, if profitable, career in the Italian wars was probably well enough known, along with

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<sup>88</sup>DII, 10:504-5.

<sup>89</sup>Really western Bolivia and the mountains and coastal zone of modern Chile rather than the central valley of that nation.

<sup>90</sup>Date from the reaffirmation of the agreement, Havana, 13 May 1539, as published in Solar and Rujula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 79-89.

<sup>91</sup>Rodrigo Orgoñez to Antonio de Vergara, Cuzco, 1 July 1535, in Porrás Barrenechea, ed., *Cartas del Perú*, 1524-43, 165.

<sup>92</sup>Orgoñez to Vergara, 1 July 1535; Orgoñez to his father, Cuzco, 2 July 1535, both in *ibid.*, 165, 167, respectively.

his lack of distinction in the conquest of Central America. The insult to De Soto was apparent. Whether the shadow of Almagro's mother's *converso* origins, and arrest by the Inquisition for witchcraft, was also known is less certain, but if it was rumored, the insult would have been all the greater.<sup>93</sup> De Soto was noble, legitimate, and of old Christian stock and had a more distinguished record in the conquests of the Americas. And unlike Orgoñez, who had little money of his own, De Soto was rich and backed by Ponce's and the partnership's assets in Nicaragua. But Almagro preferred to support a man without De Soto's ability to become independent. On that, he and Pizarro were probably agreed, because both had seen De Soto's behavior in Peru.

De Soto remained in Cuzco until early July 1535. He thus saw Almagro's army depart on July 3, to be followed by Francisco Pizarro not many days later. In fact, De Soto probably traveled with Pizarro to Lima. In late August he was a witness in Bishop Verlanga's inquiry into how the royal revenues had been handled until that date. He reaffirmed that testimony on October 15 and was still in Lima on October 26, when he appeared in support of Alonso Martín de San Benito.<sup>94</sup>

In December 1535, De Soto sailed to Panama in his and Ponce's *San Gerónimo*. In March, he, many of his Peruvian followers, and a part of his fortune departed from Nombre de Dios in Damian de Soria's *Santi Spiritus*.<sup>95</sup> Another ship in the group carried more of his fortune under the watchful eye of Luís de Moscoso, later De Soto's successor in the La Florida venture. This ship was wrecked in the Jardines de la Reina, off southern Cuba, according to one report, or at the "point of Bime" in the Bahama Channel, according to another.<sup>96</sup> Even with some losses in that wreck, De Soto arrived at Seville with a large fortune, said to be between 100,000 and 180,000 pesos. He also carried letters recommending him as a man that the government could question to learn the facts of events in Peru.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup>Porrás Barrenechea, "Notes," to Pedro Pizarro, *Relación*, in *Biblioteca Peruana*, 1st series, 2:91-95.

<sup>94</sup>*Pesquisa*, DII, 10:269-72, 288; "Información de parte de Alonso Martín de San Benito," Lima, 26 October 1535, in Medina, ed., *Descubrimiento del oceano Pacifico*, 2:359-64.

<sup>95</sup>Listed as a 1535 return (1535 R # 44) in Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *Seville et l'Atlantique (1504-1650)*, 8 vols. in 10 (Paris: SEVPN, 1955), 2:262. The unreliable nature of the records that the Chaunus used accounts for this dating discrepancy.

<sup>96</sup>Casa de Contratación to SM, Seville, 26 April 1536, in Porrás Barrenechea, ed., *Cartas del Peru*, 1524-43, 188-89; Swanton, *Final Report*, 73.

<sup>97</sup>Francisco Barrionuevo to Council of Indies, Nombre de Dios, 30 January 1536, *ibid.*; Bishop Verlanga to SM, Panama, 3 February 1536, in *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Chile*, 4:330.

De Soto's first order of business upon reaching Seville was to outfit himself and his servants, and probably a number of his followers from Peru, with clothing signifying his wealth and pretensions to status. Elvas recalled that "he employed servants, including a major domo, grand master of ceremonies, pages, equerry, chamberlain, footmen, and all the other servants requisite for an establishment of a gentleman."<sup>98</sup>

Next, De Soto had to negotiate with the House of Trade concerning the "loan" that Charles V was demanding from all who returned with loot from the empire. In undertaking the Tunis campaign, Charles needed all the money he could find and so ordered seizures of remissions from Peru.<sup>99</sup> Juan Ruiz de Arce recalled that sixty of the men from Peru lent the crown some eight hundred thousand ducats, in return for which Charles assigned various revenues to them.<sup>100</sup> This is the origin of the three hundred thousand maravedis in "rents" on the Granada silk monopoly that De Soto acquired at about this time.<sup>101</sup>

With those matters settled, De Soto and others went to court, where they spent lavishly and petitioned for various benefits. De Soto's interest was in acquiring a province to govern and the right to carry out additional discoveries. While in Seville, he had entered his request for a grant south of Pedro de Mendoza's two hundred leagues; that is, for the area granted to Simón de Alcazaba in the summer of 1534. Alcazaba had died trying to reach it. This was the same area that Rodrigo Orgoñez was also soliciting.<sup>102</sup> It embraced the southern portion of Chile and the mouth of the Straits of Magellan.

Whether because he learned that the Bishop of Plasencia, Juan Rodriguez

<sup>98</sup>Elvas, *Relation*, herein, vol. 1; Swanton, *Final Report*, 75.

<sup>99</sup>Ramón Carande, *Carlos V y sus banqueros*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1949-67), 3:170-79.

<sup>100</sup>Juan Ruiz de Arce, "Advertencias," in *Biblioteca Peruana*, 1st series, 1:435.

<sup>101</sup>Agreement of Ponce and De Soto, Havana, 13 May 1539, AGI, Justicia 750, printed in Solar and Rújula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 79-89. Elvas says that Charles paid him 600,000 reales and interest from the silk monopoly and other monies from the House of Trade. Elvas, *Relation*, herein, vol. 1. If the income were at the 3% rate normal on *juros* of the time, the principal sum was 10,000,000 maravedis or about 22,222 pesos de oro, about 20% of the fortune De Soto was said to have carried to Seville. Hernández Díaz, *Expedición de Hernando de Soto*, 32, documents of 4 December 1537 and 4 January 1538 grant Isabel de Bobadilla, the mother, power to collect 620,000 maravedis (1,377 p. 6 t. 3 gr. de oro @450 maravedis) that Charles V agreed to pay De Soto from the revenues of the treasury of Grand Canary Island.

<sup>102</sup>Casa to SM, n.d. [summer of 1536?], in Porrás Barrenechea, ed., *Cartas del Peru*, 1524-43, 185-86. Alcazaba's story is briefly noted in John H. Parry, *The Discovery of South America* (New York: Taplinger, 1979), 216.

de Fonseca, was interested in this area for his brother or some other captain he wished to patronize, or because he thought he saw a better opportunity, De Soto soon changed his petition to the 100 leagues north of San Miguel de Piura, the supposed beginning of Pizarro's 270 leagues. This was, he wrote an agent, "the most sterile and unprofitable [part] of that land," although he noted that "by way of Quito" it offered a good opening to the interior. If that were not available, he wanted Guatemala and the right to explore in the Pacific with the title of adelantado and ten percent of all goods discovered. He also wanted habits of the Order of Santiago for himself and Hernán Ponce de León and royal confirmation of their encomiendas, houses, and lands.<sup>103</sup> Evidently he was worried that Pizarro might deprive him of his Peruvian holdings.

While awaiting the decision of the Council of the Indies on his petition, De Soto entered into marriage with Isabel de Bobadilla, daughter of his old lord, Pedrías, and of a woman of the same name. Much romantic nonsense has been written about De Soto and his new bride. Wilmer (1858) seems to be the origin of much of it in English, but as recently as 1986 Miguel Albornoz incorporated their supposed love story into his work on De Soto. According to these stories, the young people had become interested in each other during the years 1514-19 when mother and daughter (then a toddler) had been in Castilla del Oro. Their love had been temporarily frustrated by Pedrías, who is alleged to have disapproved of De Soto and to have sent his daughter back to Spain to separate them.

In fact, De Soto's marriage to Isabel de Bobadilla was probably, like most such alliances, a calculated affair on both sides with the long-term preservation of property at issue. The dowry agreement was signed at Valladolid on November 14, 1536, at a time when De Soto's petition for a governorship in Ecuador or Guatemala was still pending (apparently). The possibility of a Guatemalan governorship would seem to be the point of the agreement. Isabel's sister María Arias de Peñalosa had married Rodrigo de Contreras y de la Hoz, governor of Nicaragua (1535-41). An alliance with a prospective governor of Guatemala would further solidify the Pedrías-Bobadilla interests in Central America. Isabel's relatively modest dowry of a Panamanian ranch with a herd of cattle and horses worth seven thousand pesos de oro was only part of what she brought to the marriage. Through her De Soto gained access to the Bobadilla clan, still powerful in Segovia and the royal

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.; De Soto to "Magnífico Señor," n.d., n.p., in *ibid.*, 273; translated in Swanton, *Final Report*, 75-76.

court, thanks to their services to Isabel the Catholic. De Soto offered not only the prospect of another Central American connection, but also six thousand ducats as a groom's portion (Isabel's if he died before her) and properties in Nicaragua and Peru that might pass to an heir.<sup>104</sup>

When the government finally acted, it offered De Soto not a governorship in one of the established colonies but the opportunity to conquer La Florida, roughly the southeastern quarter of what is now the United States.<sup>105</sup> Coupled with this was the position of governor of Cuba, which would serve as a supply base. Apparently Guatemala was denied to him because Bartolomé de las Casas, who held a low opinion of all Indian fighters and De Soto in particular, was trying to show that peaceful preaching would convert the Indians, even in the infamous "land of war" that had resisted the usual martial form of subjugation.<sup>106</sup> Too, Pedro de Alvarado was already governor of Guatemala. Ecuador and any part of South America were also denied to De Soto because other men were favored by court interests and, probably, because he was known to have bad relationships with Pizarro and Almagro. North America, on the other hand, was not claimed by anyone and the unpromising reputation of its coasts probably seemed analogous to the northern coast of Peru, which De Soto had said he wanted.<sup>107</sup>

After negotiations not recorded in surviving documents, the government issued his contract with a date of April 20, 1537. It is notable for being long on economic privileges and short, compared to Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón's, for example, on any emphasis on the Dominican theory of a peaceful approach to the native polities that might be found in La Florida. The contract did contain a copy of Charles V's decree of November 17, 1526, enjoining pacific treatment of the Indians, reading of the Requirement of 1514 to them

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<sup>104</sup>Dowry agreement, Valladolid, 14 November 1536, in Solar and Rújula, *El Adelantado*, 157-214; Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *Hernando de Soto: Cuba y la conquista de la Florida* (Havana: Sociedad Colombista Panamericana, 1939), 13-14.

<sup>105</sup>The contract gave De Soto the areas formerly granted to Narváez and Ayllón. Narváez in turn had obtained Ponce de León's grant and Garay's Amichel, that is peninsular Florida and the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The exact western boundary was defined by a royal decree of 30 December 1538 that set Río de las Palmas (the modern Soto La Marina) as the western border and Newfoundland as the northern border. Empress to viceroy of Mexico and others, 30 December 1538, AGI, CT 3309, Book for Florida, fols. 131v-132v.

<sup>106</sup>Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice* (Boston: Little Brown, 1949), 77-81.

<sup>107</sup>For the development of this reputation, see Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast in the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 1-102.

until they understood it,<sup>108</sup> peaceful and honest trade, no forced labor or enslaving of Indians, and no recruitment of Spaniards from the Antilles for the expeditionary force. On the other hand, the contract permitted the establishment of encomiendas, the very device that had produced all the abuses that the decree wished to avoid! To help guarantee that Indian rights were respected, at least two friars were to go on every expedition. These religious commisars were to be consulted about all matters relating to the Indians.<sup>109</sup>

To sweeten the agreement, the crown ordered an investigation to determine whether De Soto qualified for the Order of Santiago. That inquiry, conducted at Badajoz in 1537, is an important source for his background and place of birth.

By early August 1537, De Soto was in Seville, beginning to purchase ships and to make other preparations for the journey.<sup>110</sup> He fixed rendezvous for his expedition as Seville and January 1538. He then settled into the business of raising men, aided by the arrival of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, one of three men to survive from Pánfilo de Narváez's ill-starred expedition of 1528 to Amichel. Asked to join the De Soto expedition, he eventually declined, but he did tell relatives that they might be well advised to join the venture. In other contexts he spoke of things that were only for Charles V's ear, which his hearers took to mean that he knew of great riches.<sup>111</sup> Men began to gather money to pay for their outfitting and journey. Some, like Garcia Osorio, sold real estate to support themselves and their relatives (a brother in this case), horses, foot soldiers, and servants.<sup>112</sup>

The Elvas narrative provides a graphic description of the gathering of the army (herein, vol. 1). The list of men and when they enrolled has been published, although it is not certain that all went on the expedition. Three or

<sup>108</sup>See Hanke, *Spanish Struggle for Justice*, 31-33, for the content of this document.

<sup>109</sup>Text in Solar and Rújula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 91-117. The cedula is on pp. 103-106.

<sup>110</sup>José Hernández Díaz, *Expedición del Adelantado Hernando de Soto a la Florida: Notas y documentos relativos a su organización* (Sevilla: Instituto Hispano-Cubano de Historia de America, 1938), 13. See his pp. 13-31 for other contracts, especially with seamen for the ships. Hernández Díaz's documents came from only Oficio X, one of twenty-four notarial offices. Many more documents connected with this outfitting await discovery.

<sup>111</sup>Elvas, *Relation*, herein, vol. 1.

<sup>112</sup>Inquiry for Garcia Osorio, Mexico, 5 December 1560, AGI, Patronato 63 (photocopy in J. B. Stetson, Jr., Collection, P. K. Yonge Library, University of Florida).

TABLE 1. PROVINCES OF ORIGIN OF PARTICIPANTS IN CONQUESTS

PROVINCE	BOYD #	PERCENT	PERU #	PERCENT	DE SOTO #	PERCENT
Andalucía	6,419	34.2	34	20.2	92	13.2
Extremadura	2,973	15.9	36	21.4	341	48.9
New Castile	2,070	11.0	15	8.9	41	5.9
Old Castile	3,324	17.7	17	10.1	88	12.6
León	1,410	7.5	15	8.9	64	9.6
Basque	857	4.6	—	—	8	1.1
Galicia	309	1.6	—	—	12	1.7
K. of Aragon	304	1.6	2	1.2	3	0.4
Murcia	151	0.8	—	—	3	0.4
Navarra	81	0.4	2	1.2	—	—
Asturias	113	0.6	8	4.8	1	0.1
Canarias	39	0.2	—	—	—	—
Foreigners	698	3.7	2	1.2	8	1.1
Unknown	—	—	37	22.0	45	6.4
	18,743		168		698	

*Sources:*

Boyd: Peter Boyd Bowman, "Patterns of Spanish Emigration to the Indies until 1600," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 41 (1976): 585, table 1; columns 1 and 2 summed.

Peru: James Lockhart, *The Men of Cajamarca* (Austin, 1972), 28, table 3.

De Soto: John R. Swanton, *Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission* (rpt., Washington, D.C., 1985), 82.

four women also joined the expedition over and above Isabel de Bobadilla, De Soto's wife, and her ladies. Four men of possible Moorish origins have been noted. In all, about seven hundred persons sailed with the expedition, of whom eighteen had known civilian occupations (the majority tailors) and four were clergy.<sup>113</sup> Swanton has published a list and prepared a numerical analysis of some 698 names. Table 1 provides comparative information with all immigrants of 1493-1539, according to Boyd Bowman's compilation, and with the men of Cajamarca, as Lockhart has tabulated them. It is clear that, except for the very large percentage of Extremeños in the De Soto force

<sup>113</sup>Ignacio Avellaneda, *Los sobrevivientes de la Florida: The Survivors of the De Soto Expedition* (Gainesville: University of Florida, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, 1990), 7, which also contains prosopographical analyses of the 257 survivors.

(48.9 percent compared to 15.9 percent overall and 21.4 percent of the men at Cajamarca) and a correspondingly small number of Andalucians, De Soto's force had a composition not unlike that of Pizarro's at Cajamarca, while both differed by having fewer New Castilians and more Old Castilian and Leónese than the general pattern of immigration in that period.

Although most of the men provided their own weapons and supplies and probably contributed to their transportation costs, De Soto still had large expenses. At present little is known of them<sup>114</sup> aside from the fact that he pawned (or sold) the royal grant of income from the Granada silk monopoly in order to raise money. The purchasers may have been Genoese. One of their own, Cristobal Spinola, sold his goods and joined De Soto. Too, Elvas says that when he left Spain, De Soto was in debt, having arrived with a fortune!<sup>115</sup>

As the fleet made up, it was assigned the task of accompanying a group of merchantmen. Spain was still at war with France, although her diplomats were close to arranging the Truce of Nice (July 14-16, 1538). Lacking the means to provide an escort as far as the Canary Islands, the crown took advantage of De Soto's force. Swanton has provided a table listing the ships, approximate size, and commanders in the De Soto fleet. This is reproduced here as table 2.

De Soto sailed from San Lucár de Barrameda on April 7, 1538. The trip was uneventful. Gomera, in the Canary Islands, was reached on Easter Sunday, April 21. After a week there gathering water and supplies, the convoy was off again, keeping company until well into the Caribbean, when the Mexican ships went their separate way, leaving De Soto's fleet to work its way to Santiago de Cuba. They arrived there on June 9.<sup>116</sup>

After a round of welcoming ceremonies, De Soto made provision for additional fortifications at Santiago, which had been raided some months before his coming, and attended to other governmental matters. That done, he divided his expedition, sending his family and the foot soldiers by ship to Havana while he took the horsemen, divided into several squadrons, overland to Havana. Although the men were supposed to pay for the provisions

<sup>114</sup>See Hernández Díaz, *Expedición del Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 13-15, for expenses totaling 2,622 ducats for the purchase of two ships and of 653 ducats for the making of ship biscuit and for freight agreements whose value to De Soto is not indicated. These are but the tip of an iceberg of similar documents.

<sup>115</sup>Agreement, Havana, 13 May 1539, in Solar and Rújula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 79-89; Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 74-75; Elvas, *Relation*, herein, vol. 1.

<sup>116</sup>Swanton, *Final Report*, 100.

TABLE 2. SHIPS OF HERNANDO DE SOTO'S FLEET, SAN LUCAR, 1538

NAME	SIZE	COMMANDER
<i>San Cristobal</i>	800 toneladas	Hernando de Soto
<i>La Magdalena</i>	"no smaller"	Nuño de Tobar
<i>La Concepción</i>	> 500 toneladas	Luis de Moscoso
<i>Buena Fortuna</i>	"equally large"	Andre de Vasconcelos
<i>San Juan</i>	a "large ship"	Diego Garcia
<i>Santa Barbara</i>	a "large ship"	Arias Tinoco
<i>San Antón</i>	a "small galleon"	Alonso Romo de Cardenosa
(not named)	caravel	Pedro Calderon
(not named)	two pinnaces	

Source: Swanton, *Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission*, 97.

they obtained, a trail of complaints followed them. De Soto, who went ahead, reached Havana about November 1. The rest of the cavalry did not arrive until March 1539, having spent the winter living off the land and its inhabitants.

Over that winter, De Soto sent Juan de Añasco to seek out a port on the west coast of Florida and attended to the fortification of Havana and other governmental chores. With Añasco's report and the cavalry at hand, De Soto pushed final preparations. By then he had acquired four agricultural properties that could supply maize, sweet potatoes, *cacabi* biscuit (a bread made from bitter manioc), beef, pork, mutton, turkeys, and chickens, in addition to any of those supplies that he bought from other Cuban producers. One of his properties, which also had fifty resident Indians held in encomienda, was used to raise horses as well as other livestock, maize, and manioc.<sup>117</sup> Almost on the eve of sailing, Hernán Ponce arrived aboard the *Santa Ana*, a ship in which he had bought a half-interest at Nombre de Dios. He was on his way back to Spain with the proceeds of De Soto's Cuzco properties (including slaves), sold to Almagro for four thousand pesos de oro, probably in early 1538 during Almagro's rebellion against Pizarro. Ponce had also given Almagro De Soto's encomienda at Cuzco because Almagro had purchased the

<sup>117</sup>Inventory and sale of goods, Havana, 6 December 1543, in Solar and Rujula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 223-73; Irene A. Wright, *Historia documentada de San Cristobal de la Habana en el siglo XVI*, 2 vols. (Havana, 1927), 1:17.

other properties.<sup>118</sup> According to Elvas (repeated with elaboration in Garcilaso), Ponce had not intended to put in at Havana because he did not want to meet De Soto and only did so when adverse weather caused the ship's master to seek port.<sup>119</sup>

This story seems wrong on its face; ships from Tierra Firme almost never avoided a final food, water, and firewood stop at Havana, and a ship in as poor a condition as the *Santa Ana* supposedly was would surely have been brought to port before the long Atlantic crossing. On the other hand, Ponce might not have been particularly anxious to discuss their affairs with De Soto, because if he knew of the expedition he could have anticipated demands for money.

Whatever the truth of Ponce's motivations and feelings upon landing at Havana, he soon found cause for offense. On May 13, 1539, De Soto dictated his will. This made elaborate provision for charitable works and for De Soto's monument in the Church of San Miguel in Jerez de los Caballeros, but left nothing to Ponce. De Soto also induced Ponce to sign an agreement in which each accepted the other's actions in the nearly four years since they had renewed the company at Cuzco and waived all future claims for compensation under the partnership for any action taken to May 13, 1539. De Soto was particularly insistent that his expenses at court and in fitting the expedition be accepted and that he be released from any claim of extravagant spending. He did recognize that Ponce had a right to half of the income (150,000 maravedis) from the royal grant against the Granada silk monopoly, and a provision was made for Ponce to purchase for himself alone an equivalent income, using the partnerships' funds. This document so angered Ponce that he went to another notary and declared that he had signed it under duress and against his will and so would not be bound by it.<sup>120</sup> Subsequently confronted about this by Isabel de Bobadilla, Ponce renounced his renunciation, but then they became involved in a lawsuit about the company.<sup>121</sup>

Ponce's anger is understandable. Not only had De Soto squandered the

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<sup>118</sup>Oviedo, *Historia general*, 5:196, noting that after Almagro's death in the battle of Las Salinas, 26 April 1538, Hernando Pizarro appointed Felipe Gutierrez as a regidor of Cuzco, assigning him the encomienda and giving these details of how Almagro had obtained it.

<sup>119</sup>Elvas, *Relation*, herein, vol. 1; Garcilaso, *La Florida*, herein, vol. 2.

<sup>120</sup>Letter of agreement, Havana, 13 May 1539, in Solar and Rujula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 79–89.

<sup>121</sup>AGI, Justicia 750. This is the source for many of the documents found in volume 1 of this publication.

more than one hundred thousand pesos de oro he had taken to Spain, he had apparently run up large debts that the partnership—meaning Ponce—was obliged to pay. On top of that, De Soto was probably treating his former friend and one-time benefactor with a hauteur that had to have been offensive. And he was about to embark on a plunge into an area that had a reputation as a wasteland, one from which little profit might be expected.

De Soto sailed on May 18, to take advantage of favorable winds. The Florida coast was hailed on Sunday, May 25, the feast of the Holy Spirit. In due course the army was landed and began its great peregrination, as De Soto searched for mineral wealth or some other resource whose location would indicate which two hundred leagues of coast he should request from Charles V for the area of his government. His contract, it should be recalled, provided for exploration before he had to request a specific part of the continent for his territory.

Because this essay is a brief biography, the still controversial details of the landing point and the route will not be addressed. Suffice it to say that De Soto showed that he wanted to find minerals and would not settle for agricultural prospects (at Cofitachequi and Coosa), that he turned away from the coast rather than make contact with Maldonado and the supply ships he had at Achuse, and that he died west of the Mississippi River on May 21, 1542.

Led by Luís de Moscoso, De Soto's surviving soldiers, women, Indian slaves, horses, and pigs spent another sixteen months seeking riches, an overland route to New Spain, and building and sailing seven brigantines from Guachoya, on the Mississippi River, to the Rio Pánuco in New Spain. They reached that haven on September 10, 1543. Of approximately 600 Spaniards who landed in La Florida, only 311 survived to return to New Spain. Avellaneda's recent prosopographical study of the 257 survivors for whom some biographical data could be found reveals that they were what might be expected from what is known about those who embarked with De Soto in Spain. That is, the typical survivor was a male from Extremadura, about 24 years of age in 1539, able to sign his name, and a commoner who settled in New Spain or Peru after his adventure in Florida, and married.<sup>122</sup> Because there is no known list, we do not know the characteristics of the Indians who accompanied these Spaniards to New Spain. We do know that some of them later were sent to Guatemala whence they influenced Fray

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<sup>122</sup>Avellaneda, *Los sobrevivientes de la Florida*, 67–74.

Luis Cancer's ill-conceived missionary voyage to Florida and the Luna expedition of 1559-62.<sup>123</sup>

The news of De Soto's death reached Havana on December 4, 1543, when the *Santiago*, master Ochoa Vizcayno, put in with a number of the surviving members of the expedition, including Rodrigo Rangel, and with letters from the viceroy of Mexico. Within two days, Isabel de Bobadilla had obtained not only depositions about that but also a court order for the inventory and sale of De Soto's and her property. The inventory was begun on December 6 and completed on December 12. Auction of the goods yielded 3,121 pesos de oro and 3 *tomines*, all of which Isabel claimed against the 7,000 pesos de oro value of her dowry. As many as eight of the purchasers, including Rangel, may have been survivors of the expedition.<sup>124</sup> The widow and her household left Havana the following spring.

What sort of person was Hernando de Soto? His contemporaries in Central America, Sebastian de Torres, Sebastian Benalcazar, and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, offer a far from flattering picture, one that fits well with the more brutal aspects of his Florida venture and gives the lie to the romantic idealization of him as somehow different from other Spanish conquistadors. Torres and Benalcazar, both of whom had known him since 1514, testified in an admittedly partisan context in 1530 that De Soto would not make a good *alcalde ordinario* because "he is very excitable [*apasionado*] and thoughtless [*corto de razones*]" (Torres) and was an "excitable [*apasionado*], curt [*mal sufrido*] man" (Benalcazar).<sup>125</sup> That is, he was a man given to snap judgments, vehement support of persons and causes, and, likely, great anger and other emotions. In addition, he would not suffer gladly those he considered to be fools or bores. He was not, in short, the sort of thoughtful, objective, patient person who would make a good judge. Oviedo, who had seen him off and on since 1514, offered the opinion that he was "a good man in his person [that is, good looking] and very busy in this hunting [*monteria*] of Indians and he has sent many to hell. . . ."<sup>126</sup> The use of a term ordinarily denoting something akin to fox hunting, suggests Oviedo's assessment of De Soto's attitude toward his human prey.

These judgments are supported by a review of his biography. Incidents such as his rashness at the battle of Toreba (1524), before Atahualpa (1532)

<sup>123</sup>Paul Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient*, 100, 154.

<sup>124</sup>Solar and Rujula, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto*, 223-73.

<sup>125</sup>*Diligencias*, León, January 1530, in *Documentos para la historia de Nicaragua*, 2:506,

515.

<sup>126</sup>Oviedo, *Historia general*, 3:351.

and at the Battle of Vilcacongá (1533), his near insubordination throughout the Peruvian campaigns and especially as lieutenant governor of Cuzco, his bidding war with Orgoñez over the right to invade southern Chile, and finally his almost reckless agreement to explore La Florida all indicate a man who did not think carefully about his options but plunged ahead. Such boldness, coupled with his skill as a horseman and fighter with the lance and sword, seems to have been admired by many of his followers because he (and they) seldom came to harm because of it. Probably vain, clearly ambitious, but handsome and apparently well spoken (on occasion), De Soto had most of the characteristics that might make a man charismatic, even a *caudillo* in the Hispanic world of his time. Such men draw some others to their orbits, while colliding with men of similar character or of superior social status.

That he was happy to engage in the "hunting of Indians" is well attested by events in Nicaragua, Peru, and La Florida and probably would be for Castilla del Oro if we knew more about his life there. Trained in Indian warfare in the schools of Balboa, Espinosa, and Pedrías, he approached all Indians with the Central American tradition, which was one of brutal oppression directed against rulers, first of all.<sup>127</sup> On at least two occasions, he was party to, and probably led, the burning of Indians as a method of torture. He had no qualms about the Indian slave trade either in Central America, where slaves were branded on their foreheads, or in La Florida, although in the latter case he did not export any Native Americans because that would have required contacting his ships and thus admitting his failure in 1539-40 to find any minerals in the mountains, Ayllón's "Xapira."

This is not to suggest that he lacked social graces or that his personality did not change, even mellow a bit, with age. Clearly he was a man who knew how to act acceptably when the circumstances of the Spanish world required him to do so. As a youth and into his twenties, this meant being the loyal subordinate in Pedrías's Castilla del Oro and Nicaragua, at least until about 1526 or 1527 when, legally of majority age (twenty-five was the age of majority), he began to be more independent. In Peru, where he was subject to the authority of a man of lower social origins than himself, he carried off his role of subordinate with great difficulty but just enough civility so that Pizarro did not have cause to take any action against him beyond sending trusted friends, even his own brothers, along with De Soto to keep him from striking out on his own. And once returned to Spain, where his role as a leading commander in Pizarro's forces was well advertised, he apparently

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 2:165, says as much.

fitted into court life without difficulties, only to find that he was again treated like a subordinate when his petitions for a known, profitable governorship were denied. But he maintained his *amour propre* and his lavish household, putting a bold face on what must have been something of a disappointment. This behavior and his generally moderate conduct in La Florida toward the Indians (compared to his actions in Central America) suggest some moderation of his personality with age.

In sum, one has to agree with Raul Porrás Barrenechea that De Soto was "neither better nor worse than other conquistadores nor in any way a paradigm of goodness and gentleness."<sup>128</sup> Garcilaso and romantic writers who have followed his lead would have it otherwise, but a close reading of the available record shows us a man who delighted in his skill with a horse and lance when used against other human beings, was ambitious and greedy, and, in the view of contemporaries who knew him well, passionate and curt in his behavior toward others. Such a person would not be welcomed in the dens of many who, knowing only the romantic image, continue to idealize Hernando de Soto.

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<sup>128</sup>Porrás Barrenechea, "Notes" to Pedro Pizarro, *Relación*, in *Biblioteca Peruana*, 1st series, 2:98.